ROSSLYN LODGE,
AUXILIARY MILITARY HOSPITAL,
HAMPSTEAD, N.W.

TWELVE TALES

WITH A HEADPIECE, A TAILPIECE,

AND AN INTERMEZZO:

BEING SELECT STORIES

BY GRANT ALLEN

Chosen and Arranged by the Author

LONDON
GRANT RICHARDS
HENRIETTA STREET
1899

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION,	v
HEADPIECE: A CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATION,	3
I. THE REVEREND JOHN CREEDY,	11
II. FRASINE'S FIRST COMMUNION,	33
III. THE CHILD OF THE PHALANSTERY,	45
IV. THE ABBÉ'S REPENTANCE,	67
V. WOLVERDEN TOWER,	91
VI. JANET'S NEMESIS,	129
INTERMEZZO: LANGALULA,	153
VII. THE CURATE OF CHURNSIDE,	161
VIII. CECCA'S LOVER,	197
IX. THE BACKSLIDER,	215
X. JOHN CANN'S TREASURE,	245
XI. IVAN GREET'S MASTERPIECE,	285
XII. THE CHURCHWARDEN'S BROTHER,	327
TAILPIECE: A MATTER OF STANDPOINT,	347

III

THE CHILD OF THE PHALANSTERY

THE CHILD OF THE PHALANSTERY

'Poor little thing,' said my strong-minded friend compassionately. 'Just look at her! Clubfooted. What a misery to herself and others! In a well-organised state of society, you know, such poor wee cripples as that would be quietly put out of their misery while they were still babies.'

'Let me think,' said I, 'how that would work out in actual practice. I'm not so sure, after all, that we should be altogether the better or the happier for it.'

I

They sat together in a corner of the beautiful phalanstery garden, Olive and Clarence, on the marble seat that overhung the mossy dell where the streamlet danced and bickered among its pebbly stickles; they sat there, hand in hand, in lovers' guise, and felt their two bosoms beating and thrilling in some strange, sweet fashion, just like two foolish unregenerate young people of the old antisocial prephalansteric days. Perhaps it was the leaven of their unenlightened ancestors still leavening by heredity the whole lump; perhaps it was the inspiration of the calm soft August evening and the delicate afterglow of the setting sun; perhaps it was the deep heart of man and woman vibrating still as of yore in human sympathy, and stirred to its innermost recesses by the un-

utterable breath of human emotion. But at any rate there they sat, the beautiful strong man in his shapely chiton, and the dainty fair girl in her long white robe with the dark green embroidered border, looking far into the fathomless depths of one another's eyes, in silence sweeter and more eloquent than many words. It was Olive's tenth day holiday from her share in the maidens' household duty of the community; and Clarence, by arrangement with his friend Germain, had made exchange from his own decade (which fell on Plato) to this quiet Milton evening, that he might wander through the park and gardens with his chosen love, and speak his full mind to her now without reserve.

'If only the phalanstery will give its consent, Clarence,' Olive said at last with a little sigh, releasing her hand from his, and gathering up the folds of her stole from the marble flooring of the seat;—'if only the phalanstery will give its consent! but I have my doubts about it. Is it quite right? Have we chosen quite wisely? Will the hierarch and the elder brothers think I am strong enough and fit enough for the duties of the task? It is no light matter, we know, to enter into bonds with one another for the responsibilities of fatherhood and motherhood. I sometimes feel—forgive me, Clarence—but I sometimes feel as if I were allowing my own heart and my own wishes to guide me too exclusively in this solemn question: thinking too much about you and me, about ourselves (which is only an enlarged form of selfishness, after all), and too little about the future good of the community and—and—' blushing a little, for women will be women even in a phalanstery—'and of the precious lives we may be the means of adding to it. You remember, Clarence, what the hierarch said, that we ought to think least and last of our own feelings, first and foremost of the progressive evolution of universal humanity.'

'I remember, darling,' Clarence answered, leaning over towards her tenderly; 'I remember well, and in my own

way, so far as a man can (for we men haven't the moral earnestness of you women, I 'm afraid, Olive), I try to act up to it. But, dearest, I think your fears are greater than they need be: you must recollect that humanity requires for its higher development tenderness, and truth, and love, and all the softer qualities, as well as strength and manliness; and if you are a trifle less strong than most of our sisters here, you seem to me at least (and I really believe to the hierarch and to the elder brothers too) to make up for it, and more than make up for it, in your sweet and lovable inner nature. The men of the future mustn't all be cast in one unvarying stereotyped mould; we must have a little of all good types combined, in order to make a perfect phalanstery.'

Olive sighed again. 'I don't know,' she said pensively. 'I don't feel sure. I hope I am doing right. In my aspirations every evening I have desired light on this matter, and have earnestly hoped that I was not being misled by my own feelings; for, oh, Clarence, I do love you so dearly, so truly, so absorbingly, that I half fear my love may be taking me unwittingly astray. I try to curb it; I try to think of it all as the hierarch tells us we ought to; but in my own heart I sometimes almost fear that I may be lapsing into the idolatrous love of the old days, when people married and were given in marriage, and thought only of the gratification of their own personal emotions and affections, and nothing of the ultimate good of humanity. Oh, Clarence, don't hate me and despise me for it; don't turn upon me and scold me; but I love you, I love you, I love you; oh, I 'm afraid I love you almost idolatrously!'

Clarence lifted her small white hand slowly to his lips, with that natural air of chivalrous respect which came so easily to the young men of the phalanstery, and kissed it twice over fervidly with quiet reverence. 'Let us go into the music-room, Olive dearest,' he said as he rose; 'you are too sad to-night. You shall play me that sweet piece of

Marian's that you love so much; and that will quiet you, darling, from thinking too earnestly about this serious matter.'

II

Next day, when Clarence had finished his daily spell of work in the fruit-garden (he was third under-gardener to the community), he went up to his own study, and wrote out a little notice in due form to be posted at dinner-time on the refectory door: 'Clarence and Olive ask leave of the phalanstery to enter with one another into free contract of holy matrimony.' His pen trembled a little in his hand as he framed that familiar set form of words (strange that he had read it so often with so little emotion, and wrote it now with so much: we men are so selfish!); but he fixed it boldly with four small brass nails on the regulation notice-board, and waited, not without a certain quiet confidence, for the final result of the communal council.

'Aha!' said the hierarch to himself with a kindly smile, as he passed into the refectory at dinner-time that day, 'has it come to that, then? Well, well, I thought as much; I felt sure it would. A good girl, Olive: a true, earnest, lovable girl: and she has chosen wisely, too; for Clarence is the very man to balance her own character as man's and wife's should do. Whether Clarence has done well in selecting her is another matter. For my own part, I had rather hoped she would have joined the celibate sisters, and have taken nurse-duty for the sick and the children. It's her natural function in life, the work she's best fitted for; and I should have liked to see her take to it. But, after all, the business of the phalanstery is not to decide vicariously for its individual members—not to thwart their natural harmless inclinations

and wishes; on the contrary, we ought to allow every man and girl the fullest liberty to follow their own personal taste and judgment in every possible matter. Our power of interference as a community, I've always felt and said, should only extend to the prevention of obviously wrong and immoral acts, such as marriage with a person in ill-health, or of inferior mental power, or with a distinctly bad or insubordinate temper. Things of that sort, of course, are as clearly wicked as idling in work-hours, or marriage with a first cousin. Olive's health, however, isn't really bad, nothing more than a very slight feebleness of constitution, as constitutions go with us; and Eustace, who has attended her medically from her babyhood (what a dear crowing little thing she used to be in the nursery, to be sure!), tells me she's perfectly fitted for the duties of her proposed situation. Ah well, ah well; I've no doubt they'll be perfectly happy; and the wishes of the whole phalanstery will go with them in any case, that's certain.'

Everybody knew that whatever the hierarch said or thought was pretty sure to be approved by the unanimous voice of the entire community. Not that he was at all a dictatorial or dogmatic old man; quite the contrary; but his gentle kindly way had its full weight with the brothers; and his intimate acquaintance, through the exercise of his spiritual functions, with the inmost thoughts and ideas of every individual member, man or woman, made him a safe guide in all difficult or delicate questions, as to what the decision of the council ought to be. So when, on the first Cosmos, the elder brothers assembled to transact phalansteric business, and the hierarch put in Clarence's request with the simple phrase, 'In my opinion, there is no reasonable objection,' the community at once gave in its adhesion, and formal notice was posted an hour later on the refectory door, 'The phalanstery approves the proposition of Clarence and Olive, and wishes all happiness to them and to humanity

from the sacred union they now contemplate.' 'You see, dearest,' Clarence said, kissing her lips for the first time (as unwritten law demanded), now that the seal of the community had been placed upon their choice, 'you see, there can't be any harm in our contract, for the elder brothers all approve it.'

Olive smiled and sighed from the very bottom of her full heart, and clung to her lover as the ivy clings to a strong supporting oak-tree. 'Darling,' she murmured in his ear, 'if I have you to comfort me, I shall not be afraid, and we will try our best to work together for the advancement and the good of divine humanity.'

Four decades later, on a bright Cosmos morning in September, those two stood up beside one another before the altar of humanity, and heard with a thrill the voice of the hierarch uttering that solemn declaration, 'In the name of the Past, and of the Present, and of the Future, I hereby admit you, Clarence and Olive, into the holy society of Fathers and Mothers, of the United Avondale Phalanstery, in trust for humanity, whose stewards you are. May you so use and enhance the good gifts you have received from your ancestors that you may hand them on, untarnished and increased, to the bodies and minds of your furthest descendants.' And Clarence and Olive answered humbly and reverently, 'If grace be given us, we will.'

III

Brother Eustace, physiologist to the phalanstery, looked very grave and sad indeed as he passed from the Mothers' Room into the Conversazione in search of the hierarch. 'A child is born into the phalanstery,' he said gloomily; but

his face conveyed at once a far deeper and more pregnant meaning than his mere words could carry to the ear.

The hierarch rose hastily and glanced into his dark keen eyes with an inquiring look. 'Not something amiss?' he said eagerly, with an infinite tenderness in his fatherly voice. 'Don't tell me that, Eustace. Not. . . oh, not a child that the phalanstery must not for its own sake permit to live! Oh, Eustace, not, I hope, idiotic! And I gave my consent too; I gave my consent for pretty gentle little Olive's sake! Heaven grant I was not too much moved by her prettiness and her delicacy; for I love her, Eustace, I love her like a daughter.'

'So we all love the children of the phalanstery, Cyriac, we who are elder brothers,' said the physiologist gravely, half smiling to himself nevertheless at this quaint expression of old-world feeling on the part even of the very hierarch, whose bounden duty it was to advise and persuade a higher rule of conduct and thought than such antique phraseology implied. 'No, not idiotic; not quite so bad as that, Cyriac; not absolutely a hopeless case, but still, very serious and distressing for all that. The dear little baby has its feet turned inward. She 'll be a cripple for life, I fear, and no help for it.'

Tears rose unchecked into the hierarch's soft grey eyes. 'Its feet turned inward,' he muttered sadly, half to himself. 'Feet turned inward! Oh, how terrible! This will be a frightful blow to Clarence and to Olive. Poor young things! their first-born, too. Oh, Eustace, what an awful thought that, with all the care and precaution we take to keep all causes of misery away from the precincts of the phalanstery, such trials as this must needs come upon us by the blind workings of the unconscious Cosmos! It is terrible, too terrible!'

'And yet it isn't all loss,' the physiologist answered earnestly. 'It isn't all loss, Cyriac, heart-rending as the

necessity seems to us. I sometimes think that if we hadn't these occasional distressful objects on which to expend our sympathy and our sorrow, we in our happy little communities might grow too smug, and comfortable, and material, and earthly. But things like this bring tears into our eyes, and we are the better for them in the end, depend upon it, we are the better for them. They try our fortitude, our devotion to principle, our obedience to the highest and the hardest law. Every time some poor little waif like this is born into our midst, we feel the strain of old prephalansteric emotions and fallacies of feeling dragging us steadily and cruelly down. Our first impulse is to pity the poor mother, to pity the poor child, and in our mistaken kindness to let an unhappy life go on indefinitely to its own misery and the preventible distress of all around it. We have to make an effort, a struggle, before the higher and more abstract pity conquers the lower and more concrete one. But in the end we are all the better for it: and each such struggle and each such victory, Cyriac, paves the way for that final and truest morality when we shall do right instinctively and naturally, without any impulse on any side to do wrong in any way at all.'

'You speak wisely, Eustace,' the hierarch answered with a sad shake of his head, 'and I wish I could feel like you. I ought to, but I can't. Your functions make you able to look more dispassionately upon these things than I can. I'm afraid there's a great deal of the old Adam lingering wrongfully in me yet. And I'm still more afraid there's a great deal of the old Eve lingering even more strongly in all our mothers. It'll be a long time, I doubt me, before they'll ever consent without a struggle to the painless extinction of necessarily unhappy and imperfect lives. A long time: a very long time. Does Clarence know of this yet?'

'Yes, I have told him. His grief is terrible. You had better go and console him as best you can.'

'I will, I will. And poor Olive! Poor Olive! It wrings my heart to think of her. Of course she won't be told of it, if you can help, for the probationary four decades?'

'No, not if we can help it: but I don't know how it can ever be kept from her. She *will* see Clarence, and Clarence will certainly tell her.'

The hierarch whistled gently to himself. 'It's a sad case,' he said ruefully, 'a very sad case; and yet I don't see how we can possibly prevent it.'

He walked slowly and deliberately into the anteroom where Clarence was seated on a sofa, his head between his hands, rocking himself to and fro in his mute misery, or stopping to groan now and then in a faint feeble inarticulate fashion. Rhoda, one of the elder sisters, held the unconscious baby sleeping in her arms, and the hierarch took it from her like a man accustomed to infants, and looked ruefully at the poor distorted little feet. Yes, Eustace was evidently quite right. There could be no hope of ever putting those wee twisted ankles back straight and firm into their proper place again like other people's.

He sat down beside Clarence on the sofa, and with a commiserating gesture removed the young man's hands from his pale white face. 'My dear, dear friend,' he said softly, 'what comfort or consolation can we try to give you that is not a cruel mockery? None, none, none. We can only sympathise with you and Olive: and perhaps, after all, the truest sympathy is silence.'

Clarence answered nothing for a moment, but buried his face once more in his hands and burst into tears. The men of the phalanstery were less careful to conceal their emotions than we old-time folks in these early centuries. 'Oh, dear hierarch,' he said, after a long sob, 'it is too hard a sacrifice, too hard, too terrible! I don't feel it for the baby's sake: for her 'tis better so: she will be freed from a life of misery and dependence; but for my own sake, and oh, above all,

for dear Olive's! It will kill her, hierarch; I feel sure it will kill her!'

The elder brother passed his hand with a troubled gesture across his forehead. 'But what else can we do, dear Clarence?' he asked pathetically. 'What else can we do? Would you have us bring up the dear child to lead a lingering life of misfortune, to distress the eyes of all around her, to feel herself a useless incumbrance in the midst of so many mutually helpful and serviceable and happy people? How keenly she would realise her own isolation in the joyous, busy, labouring community of our phalansteries! How terribly she would brood over her own misfortune when surrounded by such a world of hearty, healthy, sound-limbed, useful persons! Would it not be a wicked and a cruel act to bring her up to an old age of unhappiness and imperfection? You have been in Australia, my boy, when we sent you on that plant-hunting expedition, and you have seen cripples with your own eyes, no doubt, which I have never done—thank Heaven!—I who have never gone beyond the limits of the most highly civilised Euramerican countries. You have seen cripples, in those semi-civilised old colonial societies, which have lagged after us so slowly in the path of progress; and would you like your own daughter to grow up to such a life as that, Clarence? would you like her, I ask you, to grow up to such a life as that?'

Clarence clenched his right hand tightly over his left arm, and answered with a groan, 'No, hierarch; not even for Olive's sake could I wish for such an act of irrational injustice. You have trained us up to know the good from the evil, and for no personal gratification of our deepest emotions, I hope and trust, shall we ever betray your teaching or depart from your principles. I know what it is: I saw just such a cripple once, at a great town in the heart of Central Australia—a child of eight years old, limping along

lamely on her heels by her mother's side; a sickening sight: to think of it even now turns the blood in one's arteries; and I could never wish Olive's baby to live and grow up to be a thing like that. But, oh, I wish to heaven it might have been otherwise: I wish to heaven this trial might have been spared us both. Oh, hierarch, dear hierarch, the sacrifice is one that no good man or woman would wish selfishly to forgo; yet for all that, our hearts, our hearts are human still; and though we may reason and may act up to our reasoning, the human feeling in us—relic of the idolatrous days, or whatever you like to call it—it will not choose to be so put down and stifled: it will out, hierarch, it will out for all that, in real hot, human tears. Oh, dear, dear kind father and brother, it will kill Olive: I know it will kill her!'

'Olive is a good girl,' the hierarch answered slowly. 'A good girl, well brought up, and with sound principles. She will not flinch from doing her duty, I know, Clarence; but her emotional nature is a very delicate one, and we have reason indeed to fear the shock to her nervous system. That she will do right bravely, I don't doubt: the only danger is lest the effort to do right should cost her too dear. Whatever can be done to spare her shall be done, Clarence. It is a sad misfortune for the whole phalanstery, such a child being born to us as this: and we all sympathise with you: we sympathise with you more deeply than words can say.'

The young man only rocked up and down drearily as before, and murmured to himself, 'It will kill her, it will kill her! My Olive, my Olive, I know it will kill her.'

IV

They didn't keep the secret of the baby's crippled condition from Olive till the four decades were over, nor anything like it. The moment she saw Clarence, she guessed at once with a woman's instinct that something serious had happened; and she didn't rest till she had found out from him all about it. Rhoda brought her the poor wee mite, carefully wrapped, after the phalansteric fashion, in a long strip of fine flannel, and Olive unrolled the piece until she came at last upon the small crippled feet, that looked so soft and tender and dainty and waxen in their very deformity. The young mother leant over the child a moment in speechless misery. 'Spirit of Humanity,' she whispered at length feebly, 'oh, give me strength to bear this terrible, unutterable trial! It will break my heart. But I will try to bear it.'

There was something so touching in her attempted resignation that Rhoda, for the first time in her life, felt almost tempted to wish she had been born in the old wicked prephalansteric days, when they would have let the poor baby grow up to womanhood as a matter of course, and bear its own burden through life as best it might. Presently, Olive raised her head again from the crimson silken pillow. 'Clarence,' she said, in a trembling voice, pressing the sleeping baby hard against her breast, 'when will it be? How long? Is there no hope, no chance of respite?'

'Not for a long time yet, dearest Olive,' Clarence answered through his tears. 'The phalanstery will be very gentle and patient with us, we know; and brother Eustace will do everything that lies in his power, though he's afraid he can give us very little hope indeed. In any case, Olive darling, the community waits for four decades before deciding anything: it waits to see whether there is any chance for physiological or surgical relief. it decides

nothing hastily or thoughtlessly: it waits for every possible improvement, hoping against hope till hope itself is hopeless. And then, if at the end of the quartet, as I fear will be the case—for we must face the worst, darling, we must face the worst—if at the end of the quartet it seems clear to brother Eustace, and the three assessor physiologists from the neighbouring phalansteries, that the dear child would be a cripple for life, we're still allowed four decades more to prepare ourselves in: four whole decades more, Olive, to take our leave of the darling baby. You'll have your baby with you for eighty days. And we must wean ourselves from her in that time, darling. We must try to wean ourselves. But oh Olive, oh Rhoda, it's very hard: very, very, very hard.'

Olive answered not a word, but lay silently weeping and pressing the baby against her breast, with her large brown eyes fixed vacantly upon the fretted woodwork of the panelled ceiling.

'You mustn't do like that, Olive dear,' sister Rhoda said in a half-frightened voice. 'You must cry right out, and sob, and not restrain yourself, darling, or else you'll break your heart with silence and repression. Do cry aloud, there's a dear girl: do cry aloud and relieve yourself. A good cry would be the best thing on earth for you. And think, dear, how much happier it will really be for the sweet baby to sink asleep so peacefully than to live a long life of conscious inferiority and felt imperfection! What a blessing it is to think you were born in a phalansteric land, where the dear child will be happily and painlessly rid of its poor little unconscious existence, before it has reached the age when it might begin to know its own incurable and inevitable misfortune! Oh, Olive, what a blessing that is, and how thankful we ought all to be that we live in a world where the sweet pet will be saved so much humiliation, and mortification, and misery!'

At that moment, Olive, looking within into her own wicked, rebellious heart, was conscious, with a mingled glow, half shame, half indignation, that so far from appreciating the priceless blessings of her own situation, she would gladly have changed places then and there with any barbaric woman of the old semi-civilised prephalansteric days. We can so little appreciate our own mercies. It was very wrong and anti-cosmic, she knew; very wrong indeed, and the hierarch would have told her so at once; but in her own woman's soul she felt she would rather be a miserable naked savage in a wattled hut, like those one saw in old books about Africa before the illumination, if only she could keep that one little angel of a crippled baby, than dwell among all the enlightenment, and knowledge, and art, and perfected social arrangements of phalansteric England without her child—her dear, helpless, beautiful baby. How truly the Founder himself had said, 'Think you there will be no more tragedies and dramas in the world when we have reformed it, nothing but one dreary dead level of monotonous content? Ay, indeed, there will; for that, fear not; while the heart of man remains, there will be tragedy enough on earth and to spare for a hundred poets to take for their saddest epics.'

Olive looked up at Rhoda wistfully. 'Sister Rhoda,' she said in a timid tone, 'it may be very wicked—I feel sure it is—but do you know, I've read somewhere in old stories of the unenlightened days that a mother always loved the most afflicted of her children the best. And I can understand it now, sister Rhoda; I can feel it here,' and she put her hand upon her poor still heart. 'If only I could keep this one dear crippled baby, I could give up all the world beside—except you, Clarence.'

'Oh, hush, darling!' Rhoda cried in an awed voice, stooping down half alarmed to kiss her pale forehead. 'You mustn't talk like that, Olive dearest. It's wicked;

it's undutiful. I know how hard it is not to repine and to rebel; but you mustn't, Olive, you mustn't. We must each strive to bear our own burdens (with the help of the community), and not to put any of them off upon a poor, helpless, crippled little baby.'

'But our natures,' Clarence said, wiping his eyes dreamily; 'our natures are only half attuned as yet to the necessities of the higher social existence. Of course it's very wrong and very sad, but we can't help feeling it, sister Rhoda, though we try our hardest. Remember, it's not so many generations since our fathers would have reared the child without a thought that they were doing anything wicked—nay, rather, would even have held (so powerful is custom) that it was positively wrong to save it by preventive means from a certain life of predestined misery. Our conscience in this matter isn't yet fully formed. We feel that it's right, of course; oh yes, we know the phalanstery has ordered everything for the best; but we can't help grieving over it; the human heart within us is too unregenerate still to acquiesce without a struggle in the dictates of right and reason.'

Olive again said nothing, but fixed her eyes silently upon the grave, earnest portrait of the Founder over the carved oak mantelpiece, and let the hot tears stream their own way over her cold, white, pallid, bloodless cheek without reproof for many minutes. Her heart was too full for either speech or comfort.

V

Eight decades passed away slowly in the Avondale Phalanstery; and day after day seemed more and more terrible to poor, weak, disconsolate Olive. The quiet refinement and delicate surroundings of their placid life seemed to

make her poignant misery and long anxious term of waiting only the more intense in its sorrow and its awesomeness. Every day the younger sisters turned as of old to their allotted round of pleasant housework; every day the elder sisters, who had earned their leisure, brought in their dainty embroidery, or their drawing materials, or their other occupations, and tried to console her, or rather to condole with her, in her great sorrow. She couldn't complain of any unkindness; on the contrary, all the brothers and sisters were sympathy itself; while Clarence, though he tried hard not to be *too* idolatrous to her (which is wrong and antisocial, of course), was still overflowing with tenderness and consideration for her in their common grief. But all that seemed merely to make things worse. If only somebody would have been cruel to her; if only the hierarch would have scolded her, or the elder sisters have shown any distant coldness, or the other girls have been wanting in sisterly sympathy, she might have got angry or brooded over her wrongs; whereas, now, she could do nothing save cry passively with a vain attempt at resignation. It was nobody's fault; there was nobody to be angry with, there was nothing to blame except the great impersonal laws and circumstances of the Cosmos, which it would be rank impiety and wickedness to question or to gainsay. So she endured in silence, loving only to sit with Clarence's hand in hers, and the dear doomed baby lying peacefully upon the stole in her lap. It was inevitable, and there was no use repining; for so profoundly had the phalanstery schooled the minds and natures of those two unhappy young parents (and all their compeers), that grieve as they might, they never for one moment dreamt of attempting to relax or set aside the fundamental principles of phalansteric society in these matters.

By the kindly rule of the phalanstery, every mother had complete freedom from household duties for two years after

the birth of her child; and Clarence, though he would not willingly have given up his own particular work in the grounds and garden, spent all the time he could spare from his short daily task (every one worked five hours every lawful day, and few worked longer, save on special emergencies) by Olive's side. At last, the eight decades passed slowly away, and the fatal day for the removal of little Rosebud arrived. Olive called her Rosebud because, she said, she was a sweet bud that could never be opened into a full-blown rose. All the community felt the solemnity of the painful occasion; and by common consent the day (Darwin, December 20) was held as an intra-phalansteric fast by the whole body of brothers and sisters.

On that terrible morning Olive rose early, and dressed herself carefully in a long white stole with a broad black border of Greek key pattern. But she had not the heart to put any black upon dear little Rosebud; and so she put on her fine flannel wrapper, and decorated it instead with the pretty coloured things that Veronica and Philomela had worked for her, to make her baby as beautiful as possible on this its last day in a world of happiness. The other girls helped her and tried to sustain her, crying all together at the sad event. 'She 's a sweet little thing,' they said to one another as they held her up to see how she looked. 'If only it could have been her reception to-day instead of her removal!' But Olive moved through them all with stoical resignation—dry-eyed and parched in the throat, yet saying not a word save for necessary instructions and directions to the nursing sisters. The iron of her creed had entered into her very soul.

After breakfast, brother Eustace and the hierarch came sadly in their official robes into the lesser infirmary. Olive was there already, pale and trembling, with little Rosebud sleeping peacefully in the hollow of her lap. What a picture she looked, the wee dear thing, with the hothouse

flowers from the conservatory that Clarence had brought to adorn her fastened neatly on to her fine flannel robe! The physiologist took out a little phial from his pocket, and began to open a sort of inhaler of white muslin. At the same moment, the grave, kind old hierarch stretched out his hands to take the sleeping baby from its mother's arms. Olive shrank back in terror, and clasped the child softly to her heart. 'No, no, let me hold her myself, dear hierarch,' she said, without flinching. 'Grant me this one last favour. Let me hold her myself.' It was contrary to all fixed rules; but neither the hierarch nor any one else there present had the heart to refuse that beseeching voice on so supreme and spirit-rending an occasion.

Brother Eustace poured the chloroform solemnly and quietly on to the muslin inhaler. 'By resolution of the phalanstery,' he said, in a voice husky with emotion, 'I release you, Rosebud, from a life for which you are naturally unfitted. In pity for your hard fate, we save you from the misfortune you have never known, and will never now experience.' As he spoke he held the inhaler to the baby's face, and watched its breathing grow fainter and fainter, till at last, after a few minutes, it faded gradually and entirely away. The little one had slept from life into death, painlessly and happily, even as they looked.

Clarence, tearful but silent, felt the baby's pulse for a moment, and then, with a burst of tears, shook his head bitterly. 'It is all over,' he cried with a loud cry. 'It is all over; and we hope and trust it is better so.'

But Olive still said nothing.

The physiologist turned to her with an anxious gaze. Her eyes were open, but they looked blank and staring into vacant space. He took her hand, and it felt limp and powerless. 'Great heaven!' he cried, in evident alarm, 'what is this? Olive, Olive, our dear Olive, why don't you speak?'

Clarence sprang up from the ground, where he had knelt to try the dead baby's pulse, and took her unresisting wrist anxiously in his. 'Oh, brother Eustace,' he cried passionately, 'help us, save us; what's the matter with Olive? she's fainting, she's fainting! I can't feel her heart beat, no, not ever so little.'

Brother Eustace let the pale white hand drop listlessly from his grasp upon the pale white stole beneath, and answered slowly and distinctly: 'She isn't fainting, Clarence; not fainting, my dear brother. The shock and the fumes of chloroform together have been too much for the action of the heart. She's dead too, Clarence; our dear, dear sister; she's dead too.'

Clarence flung his arms wildly round Olive's neck, and listened eagerly with his ear against her bosom to hear her heart beat. But no sound came from the folds of the simple black-bordered stole; no sound from anywhere save the suppressed sobs of the frightened women who huddled closely together in the corner, and gazed horror-stricken upon the two warm fresh corpses.

'She was a brave girl,' brother Eustace said at last, wiping his eyes and composing her hands reverently. 'Olive was a brave girl, and she died doing her duty, without one murmur against the sad necessity that fate had unhappily placed upon her. No sister on earth could wish to die more nobly than by thus sacrificing her own life and her own weak human affections on the altar of humanity for the sake of her child and of the world at large.'

'And yet, I sometimes almost fancy,' the hierarch murmured, with a violent effort to control his emotions, 'when I see a scene like this, that even the unenlightened practices of the old era may not have been quite so bad as we usually think them, for all that. Surely an end such as Olive's is a sad and a terrible end to have forced upon us as the final

outcome and natural close of all our modern phalansterie civilisation.'

'The ways of the Cosmos are wonderful,' said brother Eustace solemnly; 'and we, who are no more than atoms and mites upon the surface of its meanest satellite, cannot hope so to order all things after our own fashion that all its minutest turns and chances may approve themselves to us as right in our own eyes.'

The sisters all made instinctively the reverential genuflexion. 'The Cosmos is infinite,' they said together, in the fixed formula of their cherished religion. 'The Cosmos is infinite, and man is but a parasite upon the face of the least among its satellite members. May we so act as to further all that is best within us, and to fulfil our own small place in the system of the Cosmos with all becoming reverence and humility! In the name of universal Humanity. So be it.'